

Section A-2

Family Readiness Groups (FRG)

The contents of this Toolkit have been developed to assist you in your efforts to support family readiness. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information provided is current and accurate. However, because statutory and regulatory changes may have occurred since the publication of this Toolkit, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs cannot assume responsibility for its continued accuracy. Before taking any significant action based on the contents of this Toolkit, you should contact a subject matter expert in your chain of command to secure the most current information.

Family Readiness Groups (FRG)

Role of Command and Structure of FRGs

Families are an integral part of the National Guard and Reserve. Assuring their welfare during deployments and training exercises is a positive contributing force to unit cohesion, esprit de corps, and morale. The family readiness program and FRG (also known as Ombudsman in the Navy) provide a network between family members, the chain of command, and community resources while creating a climate of mutual support. A successful family readiness program fosters a sense of belonging to the unit, assures that family members receive reliable support when the service member is called away and increases group confidence and commitment. As a commander, it is critical to help teach your service members and families to care for themselves – to be self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency comes from training, assistance, and referral to appropriate organizations when problems occur. Family involvement and support cannot begin at mobilization. It must be a year-round support system during peacetime and training as well as when the unit deploys. Succinctly, family readiness is a command program.

A robust family readiness program can produce substantial benefits, including:

- Improved retention
- Improved mobilization preparation
- Improved member commitment to mission
- Improved unit and service member readiness
- Improved morale
- Enhanced family involvement in unit activities
- Improved member pride
- Enhanced propensity of family members to contribute volunteer services
- Enhanced family involvement
- Enhanced propensity for family members to support member military participation

To reap these benefits, commanders must:

- Make the family readiness program a part of the unit's daily life.
- Ask about family readiness plans and activities during briefings and planning meetings.
- Include family readiness activities on training schedules and calendars.
- Plan unit level (and higher) volunteer recognition events.
- Ensure that families are enrolled in DEERS.

- Make family readiness a unit asset – not a liability.
- Track and report family readiness as a key component of unit readiness.
- Learn from the past.
- View family readiness as a work in progress that demands continuous attention and improvement.

FRGs must be organized and structured to be effective. Draft a memorandum on family readiness groups. Establish standard operating procedures (SOP).

A sample SOP is provided below:

1. **PURPOSE:** A statement outlining the purpose of your family readiness group
2. **GOALS:**
 - a. List the goals that your group desires to achieve
 - b. Your goals can and should be revised as needed
3. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**
 - a. A general statement of the responsibilities of the military chain (command) (i.e., The unit will strive to provide the appropriate command emphasis and support for the FRG and will do all that is possible to ensure its success).
 - b. Duties of the commander. These should be very broad and general.
 - c. Duties of the Family Readiness Program staff. These duties may be more specific but should allow for unforeseen situations and change in numbers of program personnel.
 - d. Duties of the FRG. These should be more specific, but not so explicit as to stifle individual initiative.
 - e. Duties of the Chaplain if applicable.
4. **STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION:** This paragraph describes your organization and can be shown as an organizational chart on a separate page that depicts the structure and lines of responsibility.

There is no set organizational chart or standard that must be followed. The actual organization you choose depends on your unit, the support system, and the needs and desires of its members. A basic FRG structure includes the commander, a chairperson or coordinator, a treasurer, a unit administrator or personnel specialist, a secretary, an information or outreach coordinator, a sponsorship coordinator, and a family readiness program representative. Some units form a specific steering committee with representatives from each section in the unit. Job descriptions are important whether the individual is a service member, civilian employee or family member volunteer. Job descriptions provide the parameters of the position and delineate the responsibilities. They provide a framework for the individual and the organization.

The basic necessities for a FRG:

- Command guidance
- Guidelines or a SOP
- Specific positions with job descriptions – some units officially appoint individuals to positions
- Training
- Outreach to family members
- Publicity/marketing
- Volunteer recruitment and recognition
- Funding or the opportunity for fund raising
- Administrative supplies, equipment, facilities, and support
- A family readiness web site (if possible) that is linked to critical documents, with access to telephone trees, and can be used to send e-mails to rear detachment staff and FRG volunteers

When planning or sponsoring a family readiness group meeting, develop and follow an agenda. Start and end on time. Stick to the agenda. Create an open sharing atmosphere of teamwork. Form committees as needed for specific events. Encourage membership and participation!